Presentation Skills

M.Sc. in Mathematical Modelling & Scientific Computing,
Additional Skills

26th November 2025

Presentations not lectures

- Do as I say, not as I do
- My slides have too much on them for presentations — they are meant as a resource for lectures

Before you start

- Think about your audience
- Think about the amount of time you have to present
- Think about the story you want to tell
- If you could just get one point across, what would it be?
- Remember you don't have to present everything you've learnt — there may not be time to do this coherently

Slides

- LaTeX or powerpoint?
- Can use departmental Beamer presentation template for LaTeX available from https://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/it/faqs/latex/presentations
- Can use departmental powerpoint template available from https://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/building-information/stationery-office-supplies

Slides

- Many talks start with an outline. Do you like this idea? It takes some of your time.
- Even if you don't put the outline on the slides, you should make one first to plan the presentation. (It's likely this will be more detailed than the outline you'd put on the slides.)
- The talk should tell a story
  - What is the problem in words? Why is it interesting/what is the motivation for looking at this problem?
  - What is the problem in maths?
  - What did you do? (methods)
  - What did you find out? (results)
  - Summary/conclusion/further work
- Examples can be helpful

Slides

- Not too much on them — no point in having text nobody has chance to read
- Not too complicated a style — it can detract from the content
- Don't need lots of detail — if people are interested they can ask you later or read your work
- No need for the amount of time in a presentation spent on one aspect of the work to be correlated to the amount of time you worked on it
- Ensure fonts are big enough to read from the back of the room, make sure colours contrast enough
- Use references in almost the same way as you would for written reports (background references probably not necessary)

Presenting results

- Present results in figures or tables if possible
- Make sure details of figures are big enough to be seen from the back
- Less need than in written reports to give all details of how you got the results (i.e. results don't need to be reproducible)
- Explain clearly when you present the results what they show and how this fits with what you've already said

Preparation

- Make the slides
- Practise out loud
- Time the presentation — if it's too long, cut some slides! It's better to tell a small part of a story well, than a full story in a rush.
- If possible, check how the tech in the room works
- If you use your own laptop make sure it's charged and there won't be any pop up notifications
- Think about potential questions — you can even have extra slides to help with these

Giving the presentation

- Don't memorise a script — talking more naturally feels better and flows better. You may forget something, but it's not the end of the world.
- Avoid cue cards if possible, looking at the audience is nicer.
- Don't talk too fast, but do speak loudly enough that people at the back can hear.
- It's fine to have pauses to allow the audience to take in ideas, or to think about questions.
- Don't be afraid to repeat the key points

Conclusion slide

- A *brief* summary of what you did
- Make sure you repeat the key takeaway message
- If you want you can indicate future work

Conclusion

- Prepare slides and practise presenting them
- Make sure you tell a coherent short story
- Examples help
- Focus on an interesting part of your project if you've done too much to present in the time available
- Don't be afraid to repeat the important points so the audience remembers them